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SPEECH

OF

MR. COLUMBUS DELANO, OF OHIO,

ON THE

OREGON QUESTION.

Delivered in the House of Representatives, U. S., February 5, 1846.

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SPEECH

The Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union having under consideration a resolution reported by the Committee on Foreign Affairs, entitled "A resolution of notice to Great Britain to annul and abrogate the convention between Great Britain and the United States of August 6th, 1827, relative to the country on the northwest coast of America, westward of the Stony mountains, commonly called Oregon"—

Mr. DELANO, of Ohio, having obtained the floor, addressed the committee as follows:

MR. CHAIRMAN: I have not sought, nor obtained, the floor with the hope of saying any thing new upon the subject now before the committee; nor am I vain enough to believe that it will be in my power to express what I wish to say, in such a manner as to deserve or obtain the attention of its members. I have, therefore, no objections to make against the hour rule. It will afford me time to say more than I desire, and probably more than I ought. I consider it a labor-saving, as it certainly is a *time-saving*, invention.

It is probable, sir, that in the vote which I shall shortly give upon this subject, I may differ with many persons, in whose judgment I have great confidence, for whose opinions I entertain a deep respect, and with whom it is my pride and pleasure, generally, to act. I cannot consent to make this separation, be it right or wrong, without briefly giving my constituents the reasons which induce it. This being done, I shall be satisfied to leave it for them to decide whether I have, or not, a good reason for "the hope that is within me."

What, Mr. Chairman, is the precise question before us? It is this: Shall we give Great Britain notice of our intention to terminate, (at the expiration of twelve months after such notice has been given,) the 3d article of the convention of 1818, which was renewed in 1827, and by which the country west of the Stony mountains, called Oregon, with its harbours, bays, creeks, and navigable rivers, was declared free and open to the subjects of both nations, without prejudice to the rights of either.

It will be seen at a glance, that this question rises above all party considerations, as it does above all local and individual interests. It is national—not sectional. This Union, from east to west, from north to south, from centre to circumference, is every where interested in its decision. With these views in regard to it, I have given the question the best examination in my power, and by the results of this examination I shall be governed in my vote.

I am of opinion, sir, that many foreign considerations not germane to the subject have been introduced into this debate. I will not pause here to refer to these, but will state at once what I consider the true criteria for deciding whether this notice had better be given, or omitted.

First, then, as it appears to me, the nature and validity of our title to the Oregon country should influence our action; and, secondly, the effects of giving, or failing to give the notice, as well upon the country, generally, as upon our rights to the territory in controversy, ought carefully to be considered and estimated.

The latter consideration, I consider full of importance. The welfare, prosperity, peace of the country, are involved in it, or I am greatly in error. To it I shall principally direct my observations.

It is by no means my purpose, in reference to the title, to detain the committee by a minute or full examination of the subject. It has been exhausted already, in the hands of gentlemen far more competent to analyse it than myself. I mention it for the sake of order in my remarks, and because I desire briefly to refer to it, for the purpose of stating the conclusions which my mind has arrived at, in regard to the nature and extent of our title, rather than for the purpose of spreading out all the reasons which have produced these conclusions.

I entertain the opinion, then, Mr. Chairman, that by discovery, exploration, and settlement, (without adverting to the Spanish purchase,) my country has acquired an *indisputable*, and ought to enjoy an *undisputed* title to Oregon as far north as 49, and probably as far as 49½ degrees. An American citizen, Capt. Gray, was the first to explore the eastern coast of Queen Charlotte's, or Washington's island, situate between the 52d and 54th degrees north latitude; and I presume it may be said, without danger of successful contradiction, that an American citizen, Kendrick, "was the first person who sailed through the Strait of Fuca after its discovery by the Greek pilot in 1592."

Without pausing, however, to inquire into the extent, or effects of the discoveries and explorations here alluded to, I proceed to say, that in 1792 an American citizen, Capt. Gray, *did discover* the mouth of the Columbia river—that he entered it, and anchored in it, *ten miles above its mouth*—that he remained several days in this river, trading with the natives, and that this discovery was made at a period when all the British navigators entertained the opinion that no such river existed—and after Meares and Vancouver had both abandoned all farther search for it, as vain and useless—and after Vancouver had declared "*that no opening harbor, or place of refuge for vessels, was to be found between Cape Mendocino and the Strait of Fuca.*" The British plenipotentiaries, during the negotiation of 1826, admit that Capt. Gray, finding himself in the bay formed by the discharge of the waters of the Columbia into the Pacific, "*was the first to ascertain that this bay formed the outlet of a great river.*" When to this is added the exploration of Lewis and Clark in 1805, during which the Columbia was traced from its sources to its mouth, it will scarcely be doubted, by an American citizen, at least, that our title to so much of Oregon as is drained by this river is *indisputable*.

These discoveries have been followed by settlements, sufficiently prompt and extensive, to perfect and maintain the rights resulting from discovery. I have, therefore, concluded that our title to the valley of the Columbia is beyond dispute—that it is not only *the best*, as compared with the title of Great Britain, but that it is *now, the best on earth*: in short, that it is a *good* title; such an one as I would be willing to risk in an action of ejectment, and upon the *strength* of which I should expect to recover before any impartial tribunal, without reference to the *weakness* of my adversaries' claim.

But, Mr. Chairman, we have rights in the Oregon country beyond these; rights upon which I lay some stress; and which, I think, have not been fully appreciated by many gentlemen who have participated in this debate. I will briefly state them:

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In 1774 and 1775, Spain explored the northwest coast of America as high as to the 58th, if not to the 61st, degree north latitude. This exploration was made by Spain, with a view to discover and settle this country, which, at *that time*, she claimed under the decree of the Pope, and by reason of its *contiguity* to her actual dominions. Between the years 1770 and 1774, a controversy arose, and was settled between Great Britain and Spain in reference to the Falkland islands. This controversy, beyond all doubt, awakened Spain to the danger of her then pretended rights upon the northwest coast, from the ambition of Great Britain, and quickened her to *acts* of exploration and discovery, calculated to ascertain and maintain her pretensions in and to that country. Thus stimulated, Spain set on foot the voyages of 1774, under Perez, and 1775, under Heceta and Bodega, which she pursued in 1779, by an expedition, under the command of Artega and Bodega. These explorations and discoveries embraced the entire northwest coast as far as 61° north latitude. In point of time, they were *prior* to all others. They were followed by *actual* settlement at Nootka. All of which was done by Spain in order to *define* and *defend* what she considered her just dominion.

This, then, was the true *position* of both Spain and Great Britain at the time the difficulty arose between these two Governments, in regard to the seizure by the former of a vessel owned by citizens of the latter, at Nootka Sound; which difficulty lead to what is termed the Nootka Sound convention. This position of the two countries must not be forgotten.

It is clear to me, sir, that at this time Spain, at least, had the right to *settle this country*, and to *exclude* Great Britain. She claimed its sovereignty. I do not think it necessary to discuss this claim; but the *exclusive right to settle* and occupy, it seems to me, she clearly had, if there be any merit in prior discovery, followed by partial occupation and settlement.

Now, Mr. Chairman, we acquired, in 1819, by treaty, all the rights of Spain to this country. If she *then* had any title, we have it *now*. And certain it is that she had the best, if not a good title, unless she had lost it by some act done or omitted between the Nootka difficulty, in 1790, and the date of our purchase, (1819.)

In answer to this view of the subject, I have heard it stated on this floor, by the gentleman from South Carolina, (Mr. HOLMES,) that by the Nootka treaty, Spain conceded to Great Britain any exclusive right which she before then may have had to this country. I do not so understand it. I have carefully examined that treaty, and I find no such concession in it. Nothing like it. During the negotiation, and before it, Spain claimed the right of sovereignty to the whole country. This she never surrendered, abandoned, or yielded; nor did she ever agree to give Great Britain any rights in or to the country beyond the right of *trading with the natives and fishing on the coast*. The Nootka Sound convention was much like our convention with Great Britain in 1818.

Its 3d article provides that the respective subjects of the two parties "shall not be disturbed or molested either in navigating or carrying on their fisheries in the Pacific Ocean, or in the South Seas, or in landing on the coasts of those seas in places not already occupied, for the purpose of carrying on their commerce with the natives of the country, or of making settlements there;" this being subject, however, to certain restrictions and limitations specified in the treaty.

What rights are here conceded, except the right of trading with the natives and fishing in the ocean; and of making such *temporary* settlements as might be found necessary in carrying on this commerce? What right to the country is here yielded by Spain? None in the world. This was a mere commercial treaty, concluded for the sake of peace, and not looked upon by either nation as giving or obtaining any title to the country. How did Great Britain understand this treaty in 1818, when she first negotiated with us on this subject? *Then* we had not acquired the Spanish title, but *she had*, provided the Nootka treaty gave it to her. She made, however, no such pretension. On the contrary, Great Britain *then* claimed *exclusive sovereignty* over the whole country, by reason of her own discoveries, and nothing in virtue of her acquisition from Spain.

But, Mr. Chairman, in 1826, after we had acquired the Spanish title, and thereby possessed ourselves of discoveries *clearly* and *certainly* prior to the discoveries of Great Britain, we find she abandons her former position, and says she "*claims no exclusive sovereignty over any portion of the territory*," but limits her claim to "a right of joint occupancy, in common with other States, leaving the right of exclusive dominion in abeyance." To this position she had been driven by our purchase of the Spanish claim; otherwise she would, as against us, always have maintained her right to *exclusive dominion*, as she did in 1818.

It has been said that Spain did not follow her discoveries by occupation in such manner as to preserve her rights. To this I answer, Great Britain is precluded from so saying by the Nootka convention, still in existence, and under which she claims a right jointly to occupy, leaving the question of dominion in abeyance.

If two individuals, each claiming the same piece of land, and not agreeing as to the title, should agree, for the time being, jointly to occupy, leaving the title to be settled at a future period, I presume no one would say that, during such agreement, the statute of limitations would run against either, though not in actual possession. When these two persons come to settle the question of title, they will be compelled to go back to their rights at the date of the agreement.

Mr. Chairman, cannot we go back and take our position precisely where Spain stood in 1790? Which was *then* the best title, that of Spain or that of Great Britain?

If we are entitled to this position, it is impregnable; and on our Spanish title we can stand with firmness, safety, and composure. I do not desire to say, sir, that this view is certainly the correct one. That Great Britain has no fair claim to any part of the Oregon country, I do not feel myself competent to utter any such arrogant assumption. What I desire to say is, that the best examination which I have been able to give the subject has lead me to conclude that our title derived from Spain is *better* than any possessed by Great Britain; and that, independent of this title, *south of the 49°*, we have, *by discovery, and settlement, a clear, certain, absolute right.*

Various other titles, sir, have been advanced by gentlemen who have addressed the committee. Adam's will has been mentioned. "Our manifest destiny" is a favorite title with some gentlemen. And the will of the Almighty is relied upon by another. An honorable member from Kentucky, (Mr. McHENRY,) who is a very good lawyer, I believe, suggested that a will does not take effect until after the testator's death, which inclines me seriously to doubt whether the last mentioned title has any validity. Adam's will I never have ex-

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amined, and, indeed, I was ignorant, until this debate commenced, of its existence, or that it had been admitted to probate. Nor do I recognise, Mr. Chairman, this doctrine of "manifest destiny." I fear it. I greatly fear, that it teaches a very dangerous sentiment. By it we learn, sir, that our Government is to increase its territory until we are ocean bound, both east and west, and until nothing shall remain for acquisition upon our north or south. This sentiment, if encouraged, will delude us into dangerous, extravagant, and, I fear, disastrous measures. We have been told, upon this floor, during this debate, that the people of this Union have spread, and are spreading, and that they will continue to spread, until they cover this continent. This sentiment, sir, seems to possess, for some persons, a kind of charm—a sort of glory, so to speak, that does not suit my fancy.

It has been said of glory that

"It is like a circle in the water,
Which never ceaseth to enlarge itself
Until, by broad spreading, it dispenseth to naught."

I fear, sir, that this glorious doctrine of "destiny," which teaches us that our Union is to spread until it covers this continent, will, if it progresses unchecked, land us where glory and the circle are said to end. I cannot and will not encourage it here, nor elsewhere. I will not, therefore, press the acquisition of one inch of territory that is not ours by right; for I do most solemnly declare that I believe all such acquisitions will, in the end, endanger the republic. I will not lend myself to feed or cultivate a sentiment which I consider so pregnant with danger to the peace, safety, and perpetuity of my country.

This, sir, was one of my objections to the annexation of Texas. Another was, that we thereby extended the area of slavery. But, Mr. Chairman, Texas annexation was consummated, and what has followed? An increased and increasing thirst for land. You see, sir, we have created an appetite "which grows by the thing we feed it on." In less than a year from the era of this Texas acquisition you hear it proclaimed in this hall that our "destiny" is to possess this entire continent. Is it not time to pause? And would it not be well for the advocates of our title by "destiny" to read the history of certain republics which once *were*, but now *are not*?

But, sir, much as I deprecate the acquisition of territory which is not our own, still I would not yield an acre, no, not an inch, of that which belongs to us. I would not surrender a barren rock, incapable of producing a spear of grass, or blade of corn, and fit only to receive and check the ever-foaming, dashing waves of the ocean; sincerely as I dread the calamities of war, and much as I implore Heaven to avert them, still I would not dishonorably surrender this rock, if it be ours, in order to avoid these calamities. Our rights must be maintained against the most powerful, as well as against the feeblest nations upon earth. I would not take by force, or fraud, from a dwarf one penny that belongs to him. Nor would I tamely yield to Hercules a farthing of my own.

I will now, Mr. Chairman, allude to the effects of giving or omitting this notice. It has been constantly taken for granted, by those who oppose it, that it will produce war. I do not so regard it. I look upon it as almost necessary to preserve peace in the present posture of our affairs. Its effects most certainly will be amicable, salutary, and healthful to the country. It cannot be that two civilized nations, in forming a treaty for the purpose of preserving peace, would have introduced a stipulation or provision, a

compliance with which, by either, must necessarily lead to war. This position is so absurd that no one maintains it. But it is said that the measures which must follow the giving of this notice will lead to war. That depends upon the nature of those measures; upon what we do after the notice is given, and not upon the act of giving the notice.

Let us then, sir, sweep away the embarrassment, the encumbrance of this treaty of joint occupation; let us thereby put our feet upon firm and solid ground, and then, standing erect, as we shall upon our just rights, let us resolve that we will do nothing wrong, and that we will submit to nothing which is not right. In such position what have we to fear? During the existence of this treaty of joint trade and commerce we are bound by its faith. We dare not violate it, even to protect our kindred, blood, and friends. We had better lose the whole of Oregon than tarnish our national honor by doing any act in violation of this treaty, even to secure our citizens now there, or those who desire to go there.

Mr. Chairman, so long as this notice remains to be given, so long this treaty will continue to be our stumbling block; and so long as this treaty continues in existence, so long we shall continue to negotiate with Great Britain in regard to the Oregon country, as we have done these thirty years, without the least success. And, sir, I will tell you why.

I have alluded to the claim made by Great Britain during the negotiation of 1826, '7, once before during my remarks, but I will here state it more fully. The British plenipotentiaries, Messrs. Huskisson and Addington, during this negotiation, annexed to the protocol of the sixth conference what they were pleased to call "*a full and explicit exposition of [the British] claims and views.*" This "exposition," after remarking upon the broad difference between the nature of the rights claimed by Great Britain and those asserted by the United States, proceeds to say: "Over a large portion of that territory, namely, from the 42° to the 49° north latitude, the United States claim *full and exclusive sovereignty*. Great Britain claims *no exclusive sovereignty over any portion of that territory*. Her present claim, not in respect to any part, but to the whole, is limited to a right of *joint occupancy* in common with other States, leaving the right of exclusive dominion in abeyance." Now, sir, the treaty of 1818, continued in 1827, secures to Great Britain *all she claims*. It secures to her, in common with this country, the free navigation of the Columbia, the harbor at its mouth and the joint use of all the country, south as well as north, of the 49th degree of north latitude. This treaty is all she wants, all she desires, and as long as it endures, and is not violated, it is all that Great Britain demands. How is it with us?

I believe it is conceded on all sides that we have a clear and unquestionable right "*to full and exclusive sovereignty*" as far north at least as the 49th degree. That we ought *exclusively* to possess and enjoy the country up to this point. Those who are among the most eloquent in magnifying the horrors of war, and the prowess of England, seem willing to demand what they are pleased to term a "straight fence" on the 49th parallel north latitude. But permit me to inquire, sir, how we are to obtain even this, during the continuance of the treaty of joint occupation? It is impossible. We should violate the treaty by attempting it. Great Britain must and will use the whole and every part of the country, in common with us, so long as this treaty exists. We cannot prevent it. And she will never negotiate upon a fair and equitable basis until this notice be given and the treaty

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war. This abrogated, from which she derives such enormous advantage. I am, therefore, in favor of authorizing this notice to be given, and I would empower the President to give it *now*, because I believe a neglect to give it will ultimately lead to the most evil consequences.

I can well imagine a state of things that would have rendered this notice unnecessary, and perhaps improper, as a present measure. If this Oregon question had not been so unfortunate as to fall into the vortex of party strife; had it not become connected with the business of President-making and political gambling, as an immediate measure I would not urge it. I would have suffered it to progress under calm, but firm and prudent, negotiation, without excitement, without declamation, manufactured to order for party purposes; and, ad interim, I would have seen our untiring, energetic, indomitable people, going to that country, and every year, and month, and day, would have been adding strength to our possessions there. Soon, and very soon, too, the country would have become the home of our friends. Our fathers would have been there, and our brothers, too; our blood would have been there; those hardy pioneers, so worthless and useless, in the eyes of the gentleman from Virginia, [Mr. PENDLETON,] who would expatriate themselves, would have been there; and between our hearts and their hearts would have existed a chord of friendship and sympathy vibrating at the touch of each breath of intelligence passing between the two countries which never could have been severed by the distance that divides us—the height of the mountains which separate us, or the power of nations that oppose us. But this peaceful, quiet, natural course of events, has been interrupted and prevented. This emigration has been checked, if not stopped, and this question has been prematurely forced upon the country, by some of those persons, too, who now seem most to dread its consequences.

I allude to these things, for no other reason, Mr. Chairman, than to show why I think this notice should be given *now*. I do not advert to them in order to make any partisan remarks, or for the purpose of reproaching those who, in my humble judgment, have "sown the wind."

It is, perhaps, a sufficient punishment for them that they are, in common with others, so soon compelled to "reap the whirlwind." But I desire to say that I am in favor of adopting such course of action as will end this controversy; such a course as will hasten negotiation, and bring this question to a full and final adjustment.

Let us then give this notice. After the necessary time has elapsed, and the treaty is abrogated, we can assert, and, if necessary, maintain our rights as far as they are "clear and unquestionable;" farther than this I do not desire to go. If the sovereignty of the country, and the right to its occupation, belong to us, as far as the 49th degree north latitude, as it is admitted they do, why should we divide the country, and the use of it, below that parallel with any nation? Why should we, south of this line, enjoy but one *half* when the whole is clearly ours? Why continue in existence longer a convention which gives to Great Britain advantages equal with ourselves in a country to which she has no right. Annul this treaty; demand what clearly belongs to us; possess and enjoy that which we have a right to, and we have nothing to fear. In this spirit, the treaty being abrogated, we should extend our laws over our citizens in that country—giving

them the aid and protection which they need in the country, and which their safety requires in passing to and from the same.

Will these acts of justice, based upon the sure foundation of right, produce war? Will Great Britain, without just cause, and for the mere assertion of our rights, challenge us to the conflict of arms? If so, then the alternative is fairly before the country. We must either yield that which belongs to us, to the arrogant demands of a powerful and mighty empire, or fight.

Mr. Chairman, no one shudders at the thought of war more than myself. Its bloody, desolating, withering, influence, cannot be over-wrought or over-estimated. It is a kind of music that has no charms for me. I dread it, and will do all in my power to prevent it. I will go to the brink of honor to avert its coming; but, sir, I will not step off into the abyss of infamy, dishonor, and degradation. Sooner than do this, I would see my country meet the crisis, and encounter its calamities.

But it is important, on account of our internal and domestic peace, and business-welfare, that this Oregon question be terminated. Left in its present condition, and it is a plaything for political parties. We are now involved in the disastrous consequences resulting from its long delay. The famous Baltimore convention found it necessary to create some new issues upon which to conduct a Presidential canvass. Texas was the object sought, and Oregon was its antidote—thrown in to season the dish, and make it palatable. Thus the advocates of Texas triumphed; thus the friends of Oregon were quieted and satisfied; and thus has this question been made to agitate the country and endanger its peace. Omit to give this notice, and this question remains unsettled. At each recurring session of Congress the President will direct the attention of the nation and of Congress to the subject. It will continue to excite, vex, and divide the people. It will enter into your local and general elections, and constitute a new and dangerous element there; and, if it is not settled before another Presidential election, it will again be made to feed the fury of party strife and political warfare, carrying destruction and desolation to all the business, commerce, and best interests of the land.

Look at its effects upon the country already. Has it not checked commerce? Has it not stifled trade? Has it not, indeed, paralyzed all the muscles and arteries of business? It has probably furnished a rich harvest for the "bulls" and "bears" that job in stocks. But to every honest business man it has been an injury. In the language of the honorable Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, (Mr. C. J. INGERSOLL,) this question has thrown the country into a fever. Yes, sir, it is a fever; a most exciting, paralyzing, dangerous, fever. I think, Mr. Chairman, that any good physician, judging of the symptoms from the speeches sometimes here delivered, would pronounce it a "bilious fever," too. Well, sir, it is our duty so to treat the patient, if we can, as to cure him. Let us remove the cause of the disease; for, if we do not, depend upon it, the complaint will return; the patient will again be afflicted, and the disease will either become "chronic," or "remittant;" both of which are to be dreaded, and if possible prevented.

To these suggestions, so imperfectly made, but which, to my mind, seem to furnish such conclusive reasons for giving this notice, I have heard but one answer. That answer consists in assuming that the notice will produce

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y, and which war, and in declaiming upon its horrors. But, sir, whence comes this din of arms and cry of war? Why, sir, it comes from a quarter where I had supposed men were born insensible to fear. From those who carry, (as I had supposed,) their hearts in their hands—from those who should be as willing to contend for our *just rights* with the power of England, as they would be with *weak* and *distracted* Mexico. These gentlemen now tell us of nothing but the dangers and disasters of war, and the power and resources of our enemy; together with an ample description of our own weakness and insignificance.

The honorable gentleman from Virginia, (Mr. PENDLETON,) in order to ascertain the full strength and military power of England, has made the circuit of the globe since this debate began; and he informs us that he was always within hearing of British drums beating the reveille. I had heard before that the military posts of Great Britain belted the earth, but I did not know, until I heard his remarks, that they were quite so near together. However, I suppose the most of this beautiful description was the effect of fancy—a fine imagination—in short, sir, a kind of “dream,” and not a sober reality.

Another honorable member (Mr. HOLMES, of S. C.) has discovered in the heavens a dark and portentous cloud, rising from Oregon, and spreading itself above our heads with fearful aspect, threatening to annihilate us by a copious discharge of “hail stones and fire,” bullets and bayonets, and other dread missiles, incident to the perilous conflict of arms. But I apprehend, sir, that this is no sober earnestness either. I suppose it to have been but a “vision” of the gentleman; wherefore I have concluded, and I hope and trust without doing injustice to any one, that, in these latter days, “Our *young* men have dreamed dreams, and our *old* men have seen visions.”

But wherefore all this effort to alarm the country, and awaken our fears? Does the country need these efforts? Do they furnish any argument for our guide? Must we count the costs of doing our duty? Must we estimate the expense of defending our rights, and our country's honor? Rather adopt as our motto: “Let justice be done, if the heavens fall.”

This notice will not produce war. The President has no desire for war. His views and wishes in regard to the tariff lead him to court and cultivate peace with England; and I have no doubt, sir, but that the Government of Great Britain is in some manner, either official or unofficial, fully advised of this fact. The war, then, which we have to dread, and the only one which we shall be compelled to meet, is a war upon the *industry* of the country—a war upon our business—a war upon our manufacturing interests, and upon *free labor*. I have no doubt, sir, but this Oregon question will be used by the Administration in conducting this war; and I presume it will be found to be a potent engine for evil in the hands of our free trade captains. It has already performed energetic and worthy service in acquiring Texas, and in crowning with victory a doubtful Presidential struggle; and it is deemed advisable to make it add new laurels to its former achievements before it retires from the field. Oregon must still be used to prepare western ears for the harsher notes of “*free trade*.” And “*free trade*,” it is presumed, will reconcile Great Britain to yield, or at least to modify, her claim in regard to Oregon.

Mr. Chairman, it seems to me that this course is clearly foreshadowed as the policy of this Administration. What else, sir, can be inferred from the

article in the "organ" of the Administration of the 27th ult., now before me, in which it is said: "We have before spoken of the *new shape* which the Oregon question has assumed," &c.? And again: "We then alluded to this *newness* of aspect, in the question, by way of suggestion as to the *new national duty* which, in our judgment, its present position imposes on us."

The same article, after alluding to a proposal contained in the London Times, in regard to Oregon, proceeds to implore the British Government to modify this proposal, so as to make it more acceptable, and then submit it to this country, and adds: "It would not then be unreasonable to hope, that on such a proposal, *so made and so carried out to the more ample recognition of our just claims, farther negotiation might yet build a peaceful monument to the enlightened moderation and justice of two great nations.*" I think the whole of this is intelligible, and not difficult to be understood; particularly when it is remembered that it has been said in a leading English journal, that "neither to England nor to the United States is Oregon worth six months' *unrestricted traffic between them.*" The "new shape" of this question, then, is its connection with the tariff. Our "new national duty" is to abolish this tariff, and give England "*free trade.*" Then, if she will make us another proposition "to the more ample recognition of our just claims" in Oregon, "farther negotiation will build up a peaceful monument" between the two countries.

Are the people prepared for this sacrifice? Is it supposed that the West is so blind to its true interest, that it will be satisfied with such bargain as this? Does the Administration feel authorized thus to traffic with the labor, the industry, the business, the welfare, and prosperity of the country? If it does, allow me, sir, to predict that there is a day coming, and it is not distant, of fearful retribution to the plotters and conductors of this political iniquity.

In regard to the form, in which this notice shall be given, I desire, Mr. Chairman, to say a few words. I prefer, very decidedly, the proposition of the gentleman from Alabama, (Mr. HILLIARD.) This proposition, if I understand it, authorizes the President to give the notice whenever, in his opinion, the honor and welfare of the country require it. This notice, if not strictly part of the treaty-making power, is nearly allied to it. It is, at least, most directly and intimately connected with it. Many of our best constitutional lawyers consider it as belonging to the treaty-making power. They therefore oppose the notice on the ground that it is not necessary; that the President now has the power to give it provided he sees fit to do so. Whether this be true or not, sir, it seems to me that there is such intimacy of relation between this notice and the treaty-making power, that they ought not to be separated; and that the President should be authorized to give the notice, and then be left to his discretion as to the *time and manner of giving it.* It is not difficult to imagine a state of things that might render the giving of this notice unnecessary, if not improper, arising *after* the passage of the resolution here, or if existing *before*, being entirely unknown to this House when the resolution was passed. We do not know what may be the present state and condition of the negotiation. We did not know, except by rumor, that negotiations had been resumed, until that fact was announced on this floor to-day, by the Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, (Mr. INGERSOLL,) in answer to the enquiry of the gentleman from Tennessee,

(Mr. GEORGE A. HENRY.)

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(Mr. GENTRY.) Who, then, knows what is the present state of the negotiation? Who can inform us whether it is likely to prove successful or abortive? Who can tell whether it be such as to require or forbid the notice? Who can answer these questions so well, at least, as the President? None, sir; and, therefore, as this is a measure so directly connected with the treaty-making power, and as no one can judge so well *when* is the proper time to give the notice as he who knows all the facts connected with the subject, I would leave the President to give it whenever he thinks the interests of the country require it to be given. I do not look upon this course, sir, as giving power to the President. I do not favor the one-man power any more than does my colleague on the other side of the House, (Mr. THURMAN.) I desire to see the power and the patronage, too, of the President diminished, rather than increased.

But the question is this: Shall we make it imperative on the Executive to give this notice, ignorant as we are of the present posture of the negotiation; or shall we say; you may give this notice whenever you think it is advisable to do so? In either case, we confer on him the *power* to give the notice. In one event, we make it necessary for him to give it, be our condition what it may; in the other, we do not require him to do the act unless the honor of the country demands it.

It seems to me, sir, that the President should stand in this last attitude. He has brought this question before the country; he has given to the world, in an official form, his opinion in regard to the title; the negotiation is now in his hands; he has asked Congress for this power; he knows, better than we can know, the prospect of a friendly or angry termination of the present negotiation; he can, if he chooses, in defiance of us, provoke hostilities between the two countries in regard to this question. I am, therefore, for permitting the responsibility to remain where it now is—where I think it ought to be. I will leave the President unrestrained, and free to act for our best interests; and then, before God and the country, I will hold him responsible for his conduct.

Mr. Chairman, I cannot consent to close these observations without referring to a remark which I have heard during this debate, and which gave me surprise, regret, and astonishment. It has been said, sir, that the North go for this notice, and are in favor of Oregon upon sectional grounds, and with sectional feelings; that we wish to extend our population, territory, and power; and, therefore, that we make this our question. It is my purpose and design to deny and repel this charge made against the North of being sectional, and feeling hostile to the interests and institutions of the South. There is no desire in the North to disturb *the rights* which have been granted, or which belong, to any portion of this Union.

The North is a law-loving, law-abiding community. The people of the North desire to see the laws everywhere faithfully executed, and the rights of every part of the Union fully maintained. Governing themselves by this rule, they draw no line of partition from east to west, or from north to south; they have no sectional patriotism; they know but one country in which they are interested, and that, the Union. By this, sir, they understand the entire Union, and all its parts, including every segment in this great and glorious circle of our Confederacy. I deny the charge, then, that the North is sectional. I cast it back, for it is unjust, as against my constituents. But, sir, shall we be accused of local, sectional feelings, in the North?

I would not otherwise have done so, but I will now call upon the South to answer, Who is most subject to this accusation? If it be the North, let her endure it. If it be the South, then let the South answer for her own conduct before she arraigns others at the bar of public opinion.

I was not a member of this House during the last session of Congress. I did not hear the debate as it occurred on this floor upon the exciting and absorbing topic of the session; but after hearing my portion of the country traduced by this accusation of being sectional, and of acting under the influence of such unworthy motives, I concluded to refer to the debates, and see what had been said, during the discussion of the Texas resolution, by gentlemen who come from the South. I have made this examination, and I find the record more than sustains my recollection. I am surprised, after finding such declarations as were then made by distinguished gentlemen from the South, who stand so high before the country, that this charge of being sectional should now be brought forward against the North. Why, sir, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. HOLMES) spoke upon the subject, and on the occasion to which I have alluded; and I beg leave to call the attention of the committee and the country to some passages from his published speech. Here they are:

"Let the South look to it. He warned them that if the area of Southern interest and Southern growth was to be thus circumscribed, while the area for Northern expansion was stretched beyond the Rocky Mountains, until the Western hunter and the Northern emigrant should lave their weary limbs in the waters of the calm Pacific, the South would indeed be wretched."

Again:

"It is no time for the South to pause, to temporize, to compromise. The time for safe concession has gone by; opinions are arrayed; the South must meet the crisis; Texas is the stake—"

"Here must we stand,
And breast us to the shock."

These are Southern sentiments, spoken by a Southern gentlemen, uttered in this Hall less than twelve months since.

This speech deprecates the power of the North to expand to the Pacific, while Southern growth was circumscribed. It declares that it was then no time for the South to pause—that the South must meet the crisis, for TEXAS was the stake. Well, sir, the crisis was met, and the stake was won; and the result is, the extension of Southern interests, and the perpetuation of slavery, I fear. I do not pause, however, to look at the manner in which the "stake" was won, nor to anticipate the consequences that are to follow. I would, for the sake of my country's honor, if it were in my power, throw the mantle of oblivion over the deed itself, and the mode of its consummation; and I hope Heaven may avert the consequences which I have ever feared would follow in the train of this event.

But, Mr. Chairman, in the face of these things, still fresh and green in the recollection of all, it is impossible for me to hear, without rebuking its author, this charge against the North of being sectional. I throw it back. If it applies to any party, or any portion of the country, it is not applicable to me, or my political friends. I will add, however, sir, in conclusion, that after this strange avowal, to which I have just alluded, coming from the high source that it did, I feel that I may say, "it is no time for the North to pause or to temporize—opinions are arrayed, and we must meet the crisis." Oregon is the stake.

"Here must we stand,
And breast us to the shock."

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I do not desire, however, in making this quotation, to be understood as adopting or approbating the sectional sentiments which are conveyed—far from it. I predicate my action upon no such dangerous basis. I am in favor of our claim to Oregon, so far as it is *just*, no farther. To *this* extent, I am for asserting and maintaining our claim, under all circumstances, and at all hazards—preferring peace always, but risking war rather than yield our soil.

Mr. Chairman, after the open and undisguised avowal to which I have alluded, that this Republic must acquire territory in order to preserve and perpetuate the institution of slavery, is it not time for us all to pause and think? Certainly it is time for the free States, and the *freemen* who inhabit those States, to lay aside all minor differences of opinion, and agree, at least in resisting these open encroachments upon the laws and Constitution. Let us have the courage to call for the constitutional power to make acquisitions for the object and purpose here avowed. For myself, sir, I most solemnly declare, that I am always ready to use what little of ability it has pleased the Almighty to bestow upon me in preserving the external and domestic peace of the nation, and in maintaining inviolate and sacred all the rights secured by the laws and Constitution to any State, or any individual in this Union; and I am equally ready to resist, and prevent, if possible, all attempts of any section or interest to encroach upon the Constitution and laws of the country, whether such attempt be made in order to “extend the area” of slavery, or for the purpose of giving preponderance to that institution in the counsels of this Confederacy.

NOTE.—This speech was delivered before the recent correspondence between the two Governments, on the subject of submitting the Oregon controversy to arbitration, was communicated to the House by the President.